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*Published in:*  
Journal of Rural Studies

*DOI:*  
[10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.05.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.05.008)

*Publication date:*  
2016

*Licence:*  
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*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

### *Citation for published version (APA):*

Ansell, N., Hajdu, F., van Blerk, L., & Robson, E. (2016). AIDS-affected young people's access to livelihood assets: exploring 'new variant famine' in rural southern Africa. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 46, 23-34.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.05.008>

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# AIDS-affected young people's access to livelihood assets: Exploring 'new variant famine' in rural southern Africa



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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 31 January 2015

Received in revised form

16 April 2016

Accepted 22 May 2016

### Keywords:

Children

HIV

Livelihoods

Rural

Youth

Southern Africa

## ABSTRACT

The 'new variant famine' hypothesis suggests AIDS is contributing to food insecurity in southern Africa. Proposed causal mechanisms include a loss of livelihood assets and skills, brought about through AIDS' impacts on children's access to inherited property and intergenerationally-transferred knowledge. This paper employs a sustainable livelihoods framework to examine how AIDS is impacting on young people's access to assets and skills in two southern African countries: Malawi and Lesotho. Drawing on qualitative research with rural youth, the paper shows that AIDS affects some young people's access to some livelihood assets, but does not do so in a systematic or predictable way, nor are its impacts invariably negative. The broader cultural and institutional context is of key importance. The paper also demonstrates the need for the sustainable livelihoods framework to take greater account of the temporalities of livelihoods, and in particular the significance of lifecourse and generation.

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## 1. Introduction

Southern Africa's exceptionally high HIV prevalence and recurrent food crises prompted de Waal and Whiteside (2003) to hypothesise a 'new variant famine' (NVF) in which inability to access food is driven by the effects of AIDS. Among the tentative explanations are the 'loss of livelihood skills and assets' brought about through AIDS' impacts on rural children. In particular, they suggested that orphaned children may fail to inherit land or other productive assets, and inter-generational transmission of knowledge and skills may be disrupted, leaving orphans ill-prepared to build food-secure livelihoods. However, these propositions remain largely untested (Mason et al., 2010). This paper presents findings from research that explored how AIDS, in interaction with other factors, is affecting young rural southern Africans' livelihood activities, opportunities and choices. The paper applies a sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) to examine the relationship between

AIDS and young people's access to livelihood assets, with potential implications for future food insecurity.

The paper begins by briefly introducing the NVF hypothesis, and the postulated role of young people in linking AIDS and food insecurity. The SLF is introduced and the research settings and methods described. The paper then considers how AIDS affects young people's livelihoods in the communities studied, focusing principally on the processes at the heart of the NVF hypothesis. It emphasises the role of contextual factors – not just the shock posed by AIDS but also the transforming processes, structural and policy contexts that enable or inhibit access to assets and their use in constructing livelihoods, particularly relation to AIDS. The paper concludes that while AIDS is affecting some young people's access to assets, it is but one of many factors shaping young people's livelihoods and is unlikely to have a systematic or predictable effect on future food security. Moreover, the paper demonstrates that if the SLF is to more adequately anticipate livelihood sustainability, the temporalities of livelihoods, and the role of lifecourse and generation, need greater prominence.

## 2. New variant famine and the role of young people

Since 2000, food insecurity has re-emerged as a major threat,

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particularly in southern Africa where over 15 million were affected in 2002 (SADC-FANR, 2003) and nearly 29 million were food insecure in 2015 (OCHA, 2015). Southern Africa also suffers the world's highest adult HIV prevalence rates, ranging up to 27.7% (UNAIDS, 2014). This coincidence of AIDS and food insecurity led de Waal and Whiteside (2003) to hypothesise a 'new variant famine' (NVF) caused by the pandemic. Specifically, they hypothesised that 'the HIV/AIDS epidemic in southern Africa accounts for why many households are facing food shortage and explains the grim trajectory of limited recovery' (p.1234). The causal mechanisms linking AIDS and food insecurity are not well established (Gibbs, 2008) but AIDS is believed both to reduce household-level food production and to restrict livelihood coping strategies that would offer protection from food scarcity. de Waal and Whiteside (2003) suggested four drivers: changing dependency patterns, loss of assets and skills, an increased burden of care and the vicious interaction between AIDS and malnutrition. The second of these drivers implicates AIDS' impacts on young people (as future food producers and household managers), and is the most likely to threaten long-term food security.

It is speculated that AIDS diminishes young people's access to assets and skills in diverse ways. When their parents die, livestock and equipment may be sold to fund medical and funeral costs, or misappropriated by relatives (Kimario et al., 2003; Munthali and Ali, 2000). The significance of such assets and practices that govern their distribution vary between contexts: customary law and legislation, for instance, affect children's ability to inherit (Kimario et al., 2003). Moreover, if those who inherit land are too young or inexperienced to farm it, and relatives lack time and resources to manage it on their behalf, their usufruct rights may be lost, leaving them landless as adults (Slater and Wiggins, 2005; White and Robinson, 2000). In terms of human capital, orphaned children may be withdrawn from school (Operario et al., 2008). Moreover, children are believed to acquire livelihood skills by working with parents and siblings, whose premature death may interrupt intergenerational knowledge transfer (Hlanze et al., 2005; Loevinsohn and Gillespie, 2003; Mphale et al., 2002; White and Robinson, 2000). de Waal and Whiteside (2003) give the example of knowledge of wild foods and their preparation which is handed from mother to daughter and is important when faced with famine. Where knowledge is traditionally differentiated by age and gender, difficulties may be exacerbated: the surviving parent may lack the appropriate knowledge to pass on to children of the opposing gender, or the child might be orphaned before being considered old enough to learn a skill (Alumira et al., 2005; Haddad and Gillespie, 2001). de Waal and Whiteside (2003) also suggest that AIDS-affected young people may lack the planning skills and social networks that would allow them to plan a year-long strategy to protect their livelihood, drawing on income-earning opportunities, as well as direct food production.

Until recently, studies of AIDS' impacts on young people generally addressed only isolated aspects of their livelihood prospects, and many lacked substantive evidence. Research also neglected the contexts in which AIDS impinges on young people's livelihoods, and the significance of other processes in shaping their activities. The research reported in this paper was undertaken to explore holistically how AIDS affects young people's potential to participate in sustainable food-secure livelihoods in varying geographical/livelihood contexts (Pinder, 2003), and in particular how AIDS affects access to livelihood assets across generations.

### 3. The sustainable livelihoods framework

Since the NVF hypothesis focuses on the effects of AIDS on livelihood coping strategies, and the consequent outcomes for food

security, in this paper we draw on the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) developed by Chambers and Conway (1991) and subsequently elaborated by others (e.g. Bebbington, 1999; Scoones, 1998). This holistic, actor-centred approach directs attention to multiple dimensions of livelihoods and the connections between them (Adebayo and Idowu, 2007). In most formulations, the livelihood strategies people adopt, are understood to depend on being able to access, defend and sustain a range of assets (alternatively referred to as 'resources' or 'capitals') (Bebbington, 1999). In a widely used representation (Fig. 1), Carney (1998) classifies these as natural (land); social (networks, relationships); human (skills, knowledge, ability to labour); physical (production equipment, livestock); and financial (savings, income). Rather than focusing one type of asset in isolation, the SLF recognises that assets are combined in order to pursue strategies including agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration that either directly produce food or provide entitlement to it (Scoones, 1998). These strategies in turn determine resilience (including food security) or vulnerability.

A fundamental aspect of the SLF is the role played by context. This includes the 'vulnerability context' – the shocks and trends experienced over time – and also the transforming structures and processes operating at micro- and macro-levels that shape the ways in which assets can be accessed and deployed in particular livelihood strategies. The ultimate outcomes ('sustainable livelihoods') are not purely material but incorporate subjective aspects of wellbeing that vary between individuals and societies (Scoones, 1998), as well as the potential to transform society (Bebbington, 1999). Moreover, people's engagements in livelihoods reflect contests over social value and differing understandings of 'reality' (Arce, 2003).

The SLF codifies and simplifies reality and needs to be employed flexibly (Hinshelwood, 2003). Scoones (1998) advocates its use as a checklist of issues to explore. In this paper we employ it to investigate the possibility, as proposed in the NVF hypothesis, that AIDS is precipitating a loss of assets and skills. We use the SLF to shed light specifically on the relationship between an element of the 'vulnerability context' (the shock of AIDS) and young people's access to livelihood assets. Notwithstanding the significance of other livelihood goals, the outcome that concerns us is food security. Since the SLF conceives of livelihoods holistically, these relationships cannot be examined in isolation. We examine how 'transforming structures and processes' mediate not only the ways in which assets are employed in livelihood strategies, but also the ways in which they are accessed and the role that the vulnerability context plays. Livelihood opportunities and aspirations are significant, as these shape what constitutes an asset. However, our primary focus is not the strategies young people employ (whether direct food production or other), nor whether particular strategies lead to food security more than to other goals. Rather, we are concerned with whether AIDS shapes their access to assets and skills that are important for productive and sustainable livelihoods.

#### 3.1. Assets, resources and capitals: terms and concepts

In using the SLF it is necessary to be attentive to a number of critiques. Aspects of the framework have been interpreted in different ways by different scholars, and afforded different levels of significance. The conceptualisation of assets and references to 'capital' have proved particularly controversial. Scoones (2015) elaborates how the term 'capital' was used to persuade economists to think more broadly – to recognise diverse forms of capital endowments that people have access to, and control over, that may include personal capabilities, tangible assets, and intangible assets. Yet Arce (2003) warns against conflating assets with such an

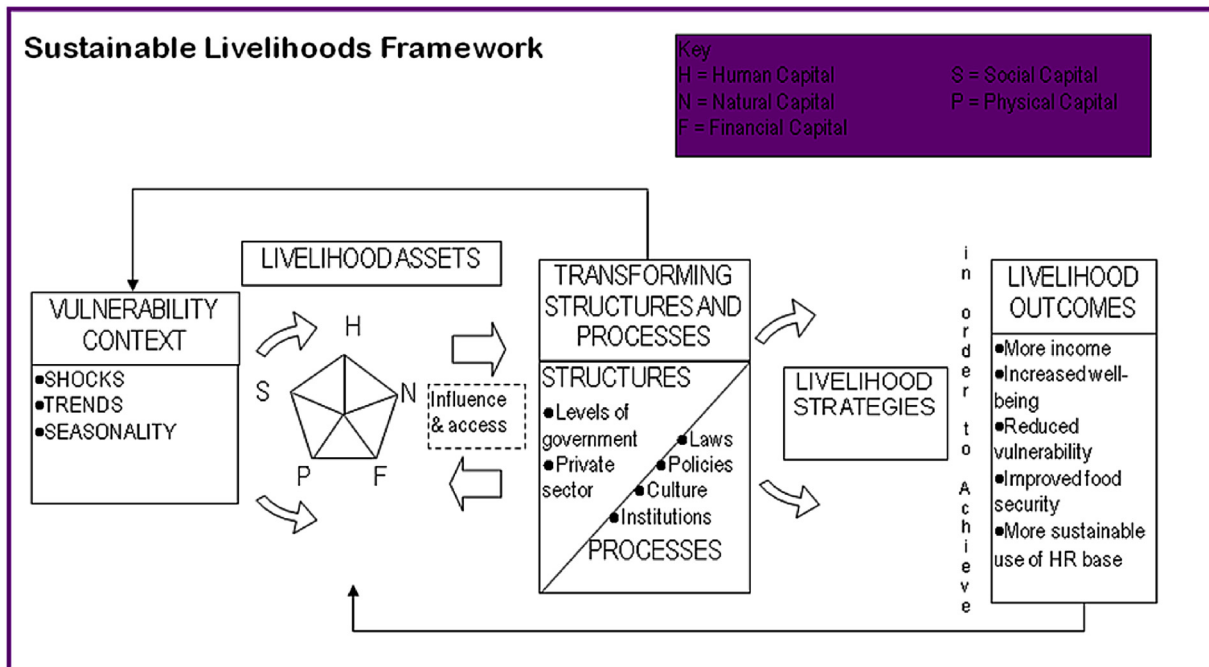


Fig. 1. The sustainable livelihoods framework (adapted from Carney, 1998).

economic concept, and Beall (2002) suggests avoiding 'capitalising' every aspect of people's lives. Reference to assets as capitals may suggest they contribute to only to productivity; Bebbington (1999) argues they are more than this – ability to read and write is worth more to an individual or society than enabling them to secure better jobs or work more efficiently. Assets – or capitals – do not merely enable people to make a living; they also give meaning to people's lives and ultimately enable people to create change (Bebbington, 1999).

The SLF's conceptualisation of an 'asset pentagon' also implies a symmetry between different forms of asset, suggesting each is accessed in similar ways and employed strategically to generate a livelihood. Yet there are important relationships between assets (Toner, 2003) and some types of asset are conceptually prior to others – they are needed in order to access the others. Indeed, access itself arguably equates to social capital, which is the means through which people access both material and other resources (Bebbington, 1999). Moreover, the SLF artificially distinguishes the inputs and outputs of a livelihood. Household livelihood strategies may for instance be categorised as accumulative, adaptive, coping or survival; accumulative strategies build the household asset base, enhancing security (Masanjala, 2007). Bebbington (1999) argues that capitals encompass resources (inputs for livelihoods), assets (that give people capability to pursue them) and outputs (that make livelihoods meaningful and viable and in turn shape future livelihood strategies). We use the term 'capitals' below to express a concept that is broader – but not more economic – than assets.

### 3.2. Relationalities: the role of institutions and power

We also recognise that the term 'capital' may conceal the fact that assets are fundamentally relational (Whitehead, 2000): they are embedded in economic, social and political relationships (Bebbington, 1999). A focus on 'capitals' and the 'asset pentagon' may appeal to economists, but risks neglecting the social and cultural issues at the core of livelihoods (Scoones, 2015). Access to livelihood opportunities between and within households is

mediated by power-laden social relations of age, gender, class, kinship and generation (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Murray, 2001; Sneddon, 2000). Relationships to the state, market and civil society also influence the distribution, control and transformation of assets (Bebbington, 1999). The 'rules of the game' governing access to resources are established through institutions, both formal and informal, including tenure regimes, labour sharing systems, market networks, credit arrangements, expressed in rights, tradition and law and operating at levels from the household to the international (Blaikie et al., 1994; Scoones, 1998). In general the micro-level politics of the household and community have received more attention in livelihoods research than macro-level political economic structures (Scoones, 2015). This both limits understanding and risks casting the poor as responsible for their own situations (Arce, 2003; Murray, 2002; Toner, 2003). Scoones (2009) has called for a more explicit theorisation of politics, power and social difference within livelihoods research, engaging in particular with the ways in which global processes such as economic globalisation shape how different people gain access to assets.

### 3.3. Temporalities: understanding livelihoods over lifecourse and generation

Livelihoods are temporally structured, yet although there has been research on livelihood trajectories and pathways of change (e.g. Leach et al., 2010; Dorward, 2009), these perspectives have never been incorporated into the SLF. The SLF includes temporality only in the 'vulnerability context'. Contextual stresses (small, regular disturbances with cumulative effect) and shocks (large, infrequent, unpredictable changes) are understood as sources of change through their effects on people's access to livelihood assets. Even here, Scoones (2009) argues that the framework is poorly equipped to deal with long term change such as that due to climate change. Livelihoods are affected by both slow and fast variables: as well as short-term adaptation, they undergo systemic transformation due to long-term secular changes that impact on successive generations (Scoones, 2009).



While recognising that contexts are temporally variable, the SLF does not accommodate the temporalities of assets and of livelihoods themselves. Livelihoods are temporally structured: even cultivating fields only brings rewards months later, and most livelihoods involve investment for the future. Livelihoods cannot respond instantly to changes in context, but neither do they remain static. They vary seasonally and between years; different combinations of strategies may be pursued sequentially and over generations (Scoones, 1998). All current livelihoods carry implications for the future and all carry opportunity costs. Assets too are temporal: they are often acquired progressively over time, and change in unpredictable ways. Human or social capital can be developed progressively, and may expand (or contract) with use. Without use, it is likely that they will decay.

Moreover, the subjects of livelihoods – the individuals, households and communities that engage in livelihood activities to support themselves over time – also exist temporally. Both life-course and generation are absent from the SLF, but highly significant to how livelihoods unfold. Many assets are acquired during youth (notably those highlighted in the NVF hypothesis), often gradually rather than in a single event. A young person may gain rights to particular assets progressively: it is often through engaging in day-to-day activities principally geared to immediate sustenance that young people accrue skills (human capital) and social capital. Conversely, day-to-day activities may deprive young people of more useful opportunities to accrue livelihood assets (Dahlblom et al., 2009), with implications for their livelihoods later in life. Significantly, various attributes that young people possess may become assets or cease to be assets depending on the circumstances. Assets also become usable at different points in time: there may be a lag between acquiring an asset and employing it in producing a livelihood.

NVF theory posits that impacts of AIDS today will affect future livelihoods. If AIDS deprives children of livelihood assets, this might not prevent them acquiring those assets over time, but some future impact is likely. The sequencing of events and their occurrence at particular ages are profoundly important. The temporalities of young lives intersect with the temporalities of AIDS (Ansell et al., 2011) and, as this paper indicates, with the temporalities of livelihoods. There is also a significant generational element. The significance of generational relations in producing change over time has only recently begun to receive attention (see Huijsmans et al 2014). However, it is clear that the ways in which generational relations are structured differ between societies, and practices of, for instance, heredity strongly influence the reproduction of livelihoods over time.

#### 4. Research design

Research linking AIDS and food insecurity has hitherto focused on patterns in quantitative household level or aggregate secondary data.<sup>1</sup> Such approaches uncover current statistical relationships, but research on livelihood sustainability must anticipate future change (Murray, 2002). This requires understanding of causal mechanisms and complex interrelationships, rather than simply identifying patterns. Causal mechanisms are notoriously difficult to identify and assess, especially where they involve social capital, but ethnographic work can identify ways in which assets facilitate forms of action that can be expected to enhance livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999).

We therefore adopted an in-depth qualitative case study

approach. Focusing on two small villages, we explored contexts, processes and motivations (Bagchi et al., 1998; Ellis, 2000). The study was undertaken in Malawi and Lesotho, both of which were said to be experiencing NVF. The villages were Nihelo in densely populated, matrilineal Thyolo District in southern Malawi and Ha Rantelali in the sparsely populated, patrilineal Maluti Mountains of Lesotho. Author 2, the main field researcher, resided in each village for approximately three months. The other authors visited and contributed to data collection and subsequently Authors 1, 3 and 4 undertook further intensive fieldwork and dissemination in the villages.

For the initial stages of the research we adopted participatory methods. Besides being widely advocated for research with children (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Young and Barrett, 2001), these help capture complex non-linear interrelationships. Participatory methods do, however, have epistemological limitations (Kesby, 2000). While useful for constructing broadly consensual knowledge on causal connections between phenomena, participatory methods proved less effective at eliciting individual stories of AIDS' impacts (Ansell et al., 2012). Given the sensitive and complex research subject, and need for empirical evidence distinguishing affected and unaffected young people, we supplemented the participatory research with individual life-history interviews, household-level data collection and ethnography. It must be acknowledged that even these methods cannot fully capture all dimensions of AIDS' impacts on young people. Experiences of living with chronically sick parents and subsequent orphanhood are, for instance, likely to have emotional and psychosocial effects that are hard to articulate and in many cases subconscious.

To understand how AIDS' differential impacts on young people's livelihoods requires a cross-section of young people of different characteristics, affected in different ways by AIDS. Those targeted for the participatory research were aged 10–24, spanning the roughly parallel transitions most young people experience (leaving school, leaving home, marriage, parenthood). Participants were selected purposively, to be broadly representative of their communities, but ensuring that approximately half fell within our definition of 'AIDS-affected'. In all, more than 50% of 10–24 year-olds in both villages participated (80 in total). Those that we classed as AIDS-affected had experienced the chronic illness or illness-related death of an adult within their households. Chronic illness was used as a proxy for AIDS because very few persons in either community would openly acknowledge that a relative had been diagnosed with AIDS: a stricter definition was thus likely to lead to misallocation of AIDS-affected young people to the 'unaffected' category. None of the young people revealed themselves to be HIV-positive, despite being asked about their own health.

In each country, participants were divided into four groups based on age and gender, and attended ten participatory sessions, where they individually or collectively produced diagrams, visual or dramatic outputs that were used to promote discussion. On a return visit 5–8 months later, individual interviews were conducted with all willing 18–24-year-olds from each village (47 in total). Participatory dissemination activities were also organised with young people and their wider communities, for feedback and to consider implications of the research.

Advocates of participatory research encourage the involvement participants in analysis wherever appropriate (Pain and Francis, 2003). Throughout the fieldwork, researchers, participants and members of national steering groups (representatives of government, NGOs, UN agencies and local academics) engaged with the emerging findings in relation to their own knowledge and experience. Following the fieldwork, transcripts, notes and visual materials were entered into NVivo for coding and in-depth analysis in an iterative process involving constant critical dialogue with the SLF.

<sup>1</sup> For a couple of exceptions that combine quantitative and qualitative research, see Kaschula (2008), Muga and Onyango-Ouma (2009).

Matrices were used to identify differences between communities and 'categories' of young people. Causal network charts were employed to build logical chains of evidence.

## 5. Young people, assets and access to sustainable, food secure livelihoods: examining the impacts of AIDS

In the remainder of this paper, we investigate young people's access to the assets they require to build food secure future livelihoods and the ways in which the shock of AIDS impinges on this access. People in both rural communities engage in diverse livelihood activities that produce or otherwise provide access to food, and the combinations of assets young people require depend on the livelihoods they aspire to. Equally, the assets available to them strongly influence their livelihood strategies. Feasible and available livelihoods differ between the two communities, and between individuals growing up within them. Thus we begin by outlining the livelihoods currently pursued in each village. We then consider the assets these activities require. We take each form of asset identified in the SLF in turn, and consider how young people access it and the role played by contextual structures and processes. We focus on the mechanisms through which AIDS affects these processes, drawing on personal testimony and the causal relationships traced during participatory activities. We also examine empirical evidence of whether young people affected by AIDS have less access than others to any of these assets. Although we present some numerical data to illustrate emerging patterns, we acknowledge that these are not statistically generalisable beyond the case study communities.

### 5.1. Livelihoods available to AIDS-affected young people

A range of livelihoods are pursued in both villages through which individuals produce or secure access to food. These can broadly be categorised as subsistence agriculture; cash crop production; livestock rearing; business (ranging considerably in scale and character); local casual employment; and migrant work (including formal sector professional posts, factory (in Lesotho), shop, agricultural estate (in Malawi) and domestic work). The livelihoods available differ substantially between the villages. Ha Rantelali's economy depends on livestock rearing, subsistence cultivation and labour migration. Although less than 3 h by road from the capital, Maseru, the village is quite remote (few children had visited the city), which limits both knowledge of alternative opportunities and the market for locally produced goods and services (although remoteness sometimes insulates against cheaper competition). In Nihelo the range of livelihoods is much wider, encompassing diverse business ventures. Proximity to several local markets allows other livelihoods to be explored. Nearby agricultural estates provide casual/seasonal work. Environmental conditions also differ. Nihelo suffers pressure on land, precluding some types of agriculture, but benefits from riverine soils suitable for *dimba* cultivation (plots irrigated by watering can for small scale cash crops). Ha Rantelali's cold climate and mountainous topography accommodate livestock rearing. Grains and some vegetables are also cultivated but few households subsist without purchasing food grown elsewhere. Significant cultural differences also exist, including between patrilineal traditions in Lesotho and matrilineal in southern Malawi. These shape how marriage affects young people's livelihoods.

Rewards vary, with implications for livelihood sustainability. In

Nihelo, tea estate work was seasonally available at US\$8.87<sup>2</sup> for 12 days; local casual employment (*ganyu*) paid upwards of US\$0.75/day; selling home-produced scones could generate US\$4.50/month; radio repair might earn US\$2.50/day (but not every day) and bicycle repair US\$6/day; a rural teacher was paid US\$88/month. In Ha Rantelali, domestic work paid around US\$29/month; the government rural works programme (*fato-fato*) paid US\$106 for 20 days' work when available; a herdboyer earned one cow a year worth approximately US\$430, on top of daily subsistence. Levels of security also vary, with some forms of work recruited only on a daily basis, and some businesses requiring expensive inputs that might be stolen or otherwise fail to yield returns. In agriculture, risks arise from the vagaries of climate and disease. It is also noteworthy that young people have family responsibilities, and may be expected to contribute to their natal household, particularly in Lesotho, or to support their own household if they are married. Table 1 provides a snapshot view of young people's current livelihood activities; many of the young people had undertaken other activities in the past.

### 5.2. Access to assets for building livelihoods

As outlined above, Carney's (1998) version of the SLF identifies five forms of livelihood asset: human, physical, financial, social and natural. Different combinations of assets produce different outcomes. Furthermore, assets are both temporal (they become available, change and may dissolve over time) and relational (existing and being managed through social relations of age, gender and generation). The paper now takes each asset type in turn and explores how AIDS affects young people's access to it. While de Waal and Whiteside (2003) focus on a limited range of assets – skills and knowledge transferred across generations (human capital) and physical/natural assets that are sold or fail to be inherited – these are closely entwined with other assets, notably social and financial capital through which they may be accessed. Young people's access to social and financial capital may also be affected by AIDS. Moreover, assets cannot be understood in isolation, so the structures and processes identified in the SLF as shaping access to assets are briefly considered, alongside AIDS' interactions with other aspects of the 'vulnerability context'. In applying the SLF to this scenario, its shortcomings and limitations are also considered.

#### 5.2.1. Physical capital

Physical capital encompasses tools and equipment as well as livestock (that can be used for transport or to draw ploughs as well as producing milk, wool, mohair, meat and leather). Some types of livelihood require physical tools; others benefit from labour saving equipment, which can make them considerably more productive. The tools required vary between geographical contexts. In general, much more physical capital is required for farming in Lesotho than Malawi. In Ha Rantelali, agricultural work is facilitated by ox-drawn tools (which require oxen, plough and ploughshare), whereas in Nihelo cultivation is by hoe. However, *dimba* cultivation requires a watering can, and is more productive if a sprayer is used to apply pesticides. In Nihelo, access to a bicycle opens up possibilities for trading or transporting goods or people, whereas a horse or donkey serves a similar function in mountainous Ha Rantelali. Some types of business require specialist equipment, such as bicycle repair or tailoring. Any such equipment may be accessed through purchase, inheritance, borrowing or rental or, in the case of livestock, through breeding.

Clearly purchase, borrowing or rental of equipment relies on combinations of social and financial capital. Those from more prosperous or better connected households, or who have themselves accumulated social or financial capital, are better placed to

<sup>2</sup> Prices converted from Malawi Kwacha/Lesotho Maloti using exchange rates for 01/01/08. National poverty lines per capita per month in \$ 2005 PPP have been calculated as 26.11 in Malawi and 49.37 in Lesotho (Ravallion et al., 2008).

**Table 1**  
Principal livelihood activities of young people.

Lesotho		Total	School	Herding	Housework/farming	Other
<b>Participants</b>						
Boys 10–17	affected	5	4	1		
Boys 10–17	unaffected	5	4	1		
Girls 10–17	affected	8	8			
Girls 10–17	unaffected	5	4		1	
Men 18–24	affected	6	1	4		1
Men 18–24	unaffected	5		5		
Women 18–24	affected	5			4	1
Women 18–24	unaffected	3			2	1
<b>Non-participants<sup>a</sup></b>						
Boys 10–17	affected	9	5	4		
Boys 10–17	unaffected	9	7	2		
Girls 10–17	affected	5	5			
Girls 10–17	unaffected	6	2		3	1
Men 18–24	affected	4	3		1	
Men 18–24	unaffected	3		3		
Women 18–24	affected	1	1			
Women 18–24	unaffected	2			2	
<b>All affected</b>		41	27	9	5	2
<b>All unaffected</b>		38	18	11	8	2

Malawi		Total <sup>b</sup>	School	Small business	Dimba cultivation	<i>ganyu</i>	Housework/farming
<b>Participants</b>							
Boys 10–17	affected	4	4				
Boys 10–17	unaffected	6	6				
Girls 10–17	affected	5	3				2
Girls 10–17	unaffected	5	4				1
Men 18–24	affected	3	1	1	2	2	
Men 18–24	unaffected	8		4	1	5	
Women 18–24	affected	11		2	5	2	
Women 18–24	unaffected	8			5	1	1
<b>Non-participants</b>							
Boys 10–17	affected	0					
Boys 10–17	unaffected	5	5				
Girls 10–17	affected	3	3				
Girls 10–17	unaffected	6	4		2		
Men 18–24	affected	1			1	1	
Men 18–24	unaffected	7	1	3	3	2	
Women 18–24	affected	1					1
Women 18–24	unaffected	1			1	1	
<b>All affected</b>		28	11	3	8	5	2
<b>All unaffected</b>		46	20	4	12	13	2

<sup>a</sup> 'Non-participants' include those who participated in very few activities and about whom little is known. Data on non-participants, drawn from the household profiling activity, is uncertain, particularly regarding whether the young person is affected by AIDS. The paper draws largely on evidence from participants, but non-participants are included in the table in part to indicate whether young people with particular characteristics were systematically excluded from the study.

<sup>b</sup> Numbers do not add to row totals because many young people were engaged in more than one principal livelihood activity.

acquire the physical capital to pursue a productive livelihood. AIDS can thus affect young people's access to physical capital by diminishing their financial resources and social networks. AIDS also affects access to physical capital through its impacts on inheritance. In general, inheritance was much more significant for young people in Ha Rantelali than in Nihelo, as livelihoods were generally more dependent on equipment and livestock. In Nihelo cultivation required only a hoe, which is cheap and replaced regularly: no one waits to inherit a hoe, before acquiring their own.

Young people whose parents die sometimes inherit equipment and livestock at a younger age than would otherwise be expected. In some cases these are seized by others because the children are deemed too young, or are simply unable to defend their own interests. Bakoena,<sup>3</sup> for instance, inherited his parents' livestock, but these were stolen. In Lesotho, young people suggested that the lives of children orphaned when young are hard, because their relatives usually take their belongings. Given that farming equipment is expensive, they are likely to lose out considerably. In Malawi,

several young people complained they failed to inherit tools because these were kept at their parent's place of work and there was no money to transport them to the village. Emily's father, for instance, had worked in town but returned to the village to die. Her brother could not collect his father's carpentry tools as transport from town was too expensive. In some cases, however, young people do inherit equipment, and can put this to immediate use to support a livelihood. If a young man inherits a herd of cattle, this can enable him to pay bridewealth. In many cases, however, equipment and livestock are sold to raise money for medicines and funerals, leaving nothing for the young person to inherit, either early or at a later date. Moreover, AIDS-affected households may have to dispose of further assets to cope in difficult times: during the 2001/2 food crisis in Malawi, such households sold assets faster than unaffected households (Gibbs, 2008).

In summary, AIDS may reduce the likelihood of children inheriting physical capital or may allow them to inherit early and employ such resources for their own livelihoods. The effects depend in part on circumstances including the child's age and geographical context, including the way in which property relations are exercised generationally.

<sup>3</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

### 5.2.2. Natural capital

For young people to engage in agricultural livelihoods, whether for subsistence or cash cropping, and also some businesses including house building and basket making, requires natural capital, access to which is subject to strict institutional regulation. The primary requirement for crop production is land, and different agricultural activities require distinct types of land. In neither country is land fully marketised: customary tenure generally prohibits direct sale. Tenure systems differ between the two countries, but in each land is allocated to individuals, and may also be accessed through rental or sharecropping arrangements. Many young people in Nihelo, for instance, grow vegetables for sale on riverine plots known as *dimba*. While some 'own' their *dimba*, others pay rent from the proceeds of their sales.

Land for cultivation is generally accessed through customary arrangements whereby, upon marriage (or soon thereafter), couples are allocated land in the husband's village (in Lesotho) or wife's village (in Malawi). These customary practices are somewhat flexible. In Nihelo, some young women were given a field to cultivate by their parents or grandparents prior to marriage, and young unmarried men sometimes also had fields, which they released to a sister when they married. In Ha Rantelali, access to arable land by married couples was far from universal. Owing to the general shortage of suitable land, young people usually rely on being given a field previously cultivated by their parents or grandparents, but often only the eldest son benefited in this way. In neither village had any young person who married without land subsequently inherited a field on the death of a parent (few had lost a parent following marriage, so this might happen at a future date). Whereas historically the chief would find land for a young man upon marriage, under Lesotho's current land policy a village land committee has begun distributing unused fields to landless households, benefiting some recently married couples. The land committee is supposed also to allocate fields to unmarried men and women, removing the marriage barrier for entry to agricultural livelihoods, but this had not happened in practice. Numerous young people in Ha Rantelali, ignorant of the land committee's role, said they would ask the chief to let them clear uncultivated land for a field, if they could not acquire land from parents. In Nihelo, some families had relocated to former tea estates through a government land redistribution scheme, and had acquired substantially more land. This might be an option for land-poor youth in future. Other natural resources including firewood, water and grazing land, all of which were highlighted as important resources by the young people, are communally managed in both villages, and no individual complained they could not access these.

Access to land remains somewhat uneven, however, and within the institutional context outlined above, and under the influence of entrenched inheritance practices, AIDS can significantly shape young people's access. In temporal terms, while land can be used indefinitely if cared for, a person's access to, and relationship with, land differs with age and changes over time. Inheriting land is a very different proposition for those aged 4 or 14 or 24, with considerable implications for future rights to the land. The death of a parent (a father in Lesotho or mother in Malawi) before a young person marries can give them premature 'ownership' of land. For a few, like young brothers Victor (12) and Blessings (10) in Nihelo, this offers the security of generating an immediate livelihood through cultivation. However, if a child is very young, they might be deemed incapable of caring for the land, or be sent elsewhere to live, and thus relatives take the land and the child may permanently lose access to it. In line with the findings of Peters et al. (2008) in Zomba District, there was little evidence of land grabbing in Malawi, where even very young children inherited land and were helped to cultivate it. One young Nihelo man, orphaned in

Mozambique, had lost land to his paternal relatives, and a young woman had lost a *dimba* to relatives, but this was returned when she married. In Lesotho, however, young people commented that if a child moved to another village because their parents died, they might be unable to reclaim their parents' fields if they returned as adults, since their rights were lost when the fields were unused. Some did expect to receive their land back: Bakoena's grandmother was farming his fields while he worked as a herdboys; once he married, he expected them back. It is noteworthy that not all Basotho children would expect to inherit land even in the absence of AIDS: often only the eldest son inherits. Girls depend on their husbands accessing land; this too might be less likely for those affected by AIDS. Mamoletsane, for instance, married a man with few resources because she was AIDS-affected. Her father having died, her husband could marry her without paying bridewealth. However, he was a younger son and therefore lacked land. Where young people do inherit land prematurely, some rent it out in the short term, in Lesotho through sharecropping arrangements. In Nihelo, siblings David and Julita had been orphaned as teenagers. They rented out a field they felt unable to cultivate. This can ensure the land provides income for their immediate sustenance but carries a risk they will be unable to reclaim it, in part due to lack of formal paperwork.

Once again, AIDS deaths have diverse impacts on young people's access to land, providing some with access early in life and for others permanently curtailing their prospects of securing land. The timing of AIDS deaths relative to children's lives is often of key importance.

### 5.2.3. Human capital

All livelihoods require certain skills and knowledge. Most rural livelihoods (crop growing, herding, radio repair, brewing) require skills that are generally acquired informally. These are the skills that de Waal and Whiteside (2003) considered to be threatened by AIDS. When asked how they had learned the skills required for their livelihoods, most young people referred to friends or spouses. Among the Nihelo women, for instance, Mary and Loveness were taught baking by friends, while Aleya and Janet learned *dimba* cultivation by copying friends. Children participate in activities such as farming or herding from infancy, and learn very informally and continuously over time, irrespective of who they live with (although migrants from town may need to learn more quickly). Some (generally more lucrative) livelihoods, such as driving, house building or carpentry, demand higher levels of skill, or less commonly transmitted skills. Training in these usually cost money although some were able to learn from a relative or close friend. Only one young person had received formal vocational training: Mathabang learned to sew at a training school in Lesotho's handicrafts village. Her husband had paid her fees, but she, too, lacked finance to invest in employing the skill.

Most children in both villages aspired not to these types of livelihood, however, but to forms of (better paid and more secure) employment that required educational qualifications attainable through successful completion of secondary school. This situation, common to both countries, is a product of the scarcity of employment opportunities in rural and urban settings, and an institutionally entrenched use of educational qualifications as a barrier to access these limited opportunities. Very few young people from either community had attained educational qualifications, although most had spent some years in school (again partly a reflection of national education provision). In Nihelo, the 18–24 year olds interviewed had on average reached primary Standard 5. Only five of the 27 had begun secondary school, and two had completed secondary education, although without gaining the qualifications required for formal sector work. In Ha Rantelali, the



young people interviewed had on average reached Standard 6. Six of the 21 had started secondary school, but only one had finished. While young people undoubtedly acquire some forms of skill and knowledge through schooling, the applicability of formal education to rural livelihoods is not obvious, even to the young people themselves. None of those interviewed could cite how their schooling had been useful to them (see also Ansell, 2002; Chant and Jones, 2005). While school might provide forms of human capital they are unaware of, the number of young people for whom having attended school beyond a very basic level is a significant livelihood asset is very small.

There are characteristics of human capital that affect how it is acquired and also whether AIDS is likely to affect its acquisition. Human capital is fundamentally temporal: it is accumulated progressively over time, but might decay if not practised, or if skills become outdated. Schooling, particularly primary schooling, is also somewhat timebound in when it can be acquired. Although neither country imposes age limits on school attendance, in practice children report difficulties attending primary school when considerably older than their peers, because of embarrassment, shame and ridicule. Mussa decided to start school at 15, after having worked as a watchman, a gardener and in macadamia plantations, but dropped out within a year since 'people were laughing at me that I am old, so I just decided to continue doing what I was doing before'.

AIDS can impinge on young people's development of human capital, partly by affecting their access to financial and social capital. But AIDS can have more direct effects. Young people are sometimes withdrawn from school because a relative is sick or dies. In general, this is due to the economic impact of the disease. (Other causes of economic stress similarly lead children to drop out.) Mamoletsane, for instance, was in secondary Form B when her father died. He had been a miner, and the loss of income left no money for her fees. Others find their schooling is disrupted when they have to move home due to parental death, particularly when this happens suddenly and they cannot acquire transfer papers. When Irene's father died, for instance, she moved to her uncle's home, but as it was the second school term she could not get a transfer, and spent more than a year out of school. Alice went to live with her aunt when her mother was sick, but her father was too busy caring for his wife to sort out transfer papers, so Alice could not attend school from then on. At secondary level, even those with transfer letters are sometimes required to restart the education cycle they have begun, which might mean a student in their third year of secondary school has to re-enter the first form. However, despite reports of such occurrences, in practice, AIDS-affected children were more likely to be attending school, and on average progressed further through school than other children. Among the 18–24 year olds interviewed, in Nihelo AIDS-affected youth had progressed on average a class further than those unaffected; in Ha Rantelali the difference was nearly two classes. Moreover, three of the five who had begun secondary school in Nihelo and four of the six in Ha Rantelali were affected by AIDS. Although these figures are not statistically generalisable, they suggest that in these villages AIDS is not strongly harming education prospects (Gould and Huber, 2008 report similar findings in rural Tanzania).

The reason behind this anomaly, particularly at secondary level, is most likely that while few poor children can afford to attend secondary school, various bursaries and scholarships are available to orphans. Edison, a 21 year old orphan from Nihelo, explained:

While many children dropped out of school for lack of uniform or soap to wash their clothes, Basotho orphans were assisted by government or NGOs. Thus Lisebo, an 11 year old double orphan living with her grandmother, could insist her life was easy compared to her peers 'because we have been supplied by food aid, we get the uniforms, shoes and school fees'. Schooling practices, NGO interventions and government policy play key roles in mediating the impacts of AIDS on young people's acquisition of educational capital. These 'transforming structures and processes' hinder some young people's access (through transfer procedures) but increasingly favour those designated as orphans (through provision of bursaries).

AIDS-affected young people similarly do not appear particularly disadvantaged in relation to informal or vocational learning. Basic livelihood skills are learned performatively, and orphans are no less likely to participate in agriculture or herding than children whose parents are alive. Contrary to de Waal and Whiteside's (2003) concern that intergenerational knowledge transfer is disrupted by AIDS, the young participants in the research cited diverse individuals from whom they learned various skills. Patric, in Nihelo, drew a social network map illustrating the different friends from whom he had learned to hunt, irrigate tomatoes and build houses. Guidance on basic skills is widely available. Even among non-orphans, parents seldom featured prominently among their sources of knowledge, skills and ideas. This may be because traditional deference to adults, particularly in Malawi, makes children reluctant to question their parents, and thus better able to learn from peers. Lack of money may prevent AIDS-affected young school leavers from taking opportunities to learn new skills to launch business ventures, but none of the young people interviewed complained of this having happened to them. Indeed, Tumelo paid US\$215 to learn coffin-building from a street carpenter in Maseru following his father's death, while orphaned Mamoletsane learned the skill for nothing from her uncle. Carpentry skills alone, however, are insufficient; their value depends upon being in a context in which they can be profitably employed. Tumelo made money from carpentry as he had weekday employment at a remote school where the market for coffins was substantial (owing to the need to bury the dead quickly in the absence of mortuaries and difficulty of transporting coffins from elsewhere). Mamoletsane, however, could not practise the skill as she could not afford tools or materials.

AIDS is by no means the only influence on young people's human capital, and again we see that while AIDS can reduce human capital, it can also have the opposite effect. This may be an outcome of interventions targeting orphans, as well as efforts of families and communities, and generational relations. Thus structures and processes within and beyond the community, highlighted in the SLF, play significant roles, but there are temporal aspects that also require consideration.

Much as physical capital is also closely tied to social and financial capital, so is human capital. Formal education, whether academic or vocational, generally costs money, and even informal learning can be costly. Moreover, all forms of learning are facilitated by social capital – those with relatives willing to pay for their education or train them in a lucrative livelihood skill are better able to develop their human capital. The SLF points to the interrelation of these assets, and hence social and financial capital, while not directly addressed in de Waal and Whiteside's (2003) NVF article, are discussed in turn below.

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Interviewer:	<i>How did you find the money to go to secondary?</i>
Edison:	<i>I was assisted by a certain mission, the Evangelical Lutheran.</i>
Interviewer:	<i>Is it common for the churches to have something like that?</i>
Edison:	<i>No. They mostly do this when the student is an orphan.</i>
Interviewer:	<i>What about those whose parents are alive but poor?</i>
Edison:	<i>It means they have not to go to school. Sometimes it also includes poor dressing that can be a factor to stop someone from going to school</i>

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#### 5.2.4. Social capital

Most livelihoods depend to some degree on social capital, either because it is valuable in itself or because it provides access to other necessary assets. Social capital is developed through social networks which can both expand the livelihood opportunities available to young people and their prospects of success. Access to opportunities can depend on ideas, encouragement, land, equipment and funds from personal acquaintances. Many young people learn skills from friends, including quite lucrative trades such as building. Social networks are often crucial for learning about job opportunities, and may provide accommodation when searching for employment outside the village. Mathabang, for instance, was found factory work in Maseru by her sister, and stayed with her for several months. Social networks also provide potential employers and markets for goods produced or traded.

While generally informal, social networks are moulded and given significance through the 'transforming processes and structures' operating in specific contexts. Such networks take many forms and not all offer the same level of social capital. Family is perhaps the key institution whose rules shape access to social capital. Family connections are deliberately nurtured through practices such as, in Lesotho, placing the eldest child with their maternal grandparents for a few years. They are also cultivated by young people themselves, who recognise their value – particularly in relation to securing financial assistance. Social networks are widened through formal institutions such as education, and through initiation rites which serve many villages. In Lesotho, initiation schools bring boys together in a remote place for several months, and they build relationships that might prove valuable in future years. Experience of migration (commonplace in both contexts for historical economic reasons) can also connect children to people across a range of places, although in the short term migration seriously disrupts social networks, and it can take time to make useful connections. Marriage, too, is a context-specific institution that disrupts social networks for men in matrilineal southern Malawi and women in patrilineal Lesotho, affecting livelihood opportunities. Rex, was one of several young married men who found it difficult to work as a builder in Nihelo, because the residents preferred to employ young unmarried men who had grown up in the village. In Lesotho, marriage removes many women from their previous livelihoods: Mathabo helped in her parent's shop until she moved to her husband's home in Ha Rantelali.

Young people's social networks are undoubtedly disrupted by AIDS, particularly through the deaths of family members. As social capital is fundamental to accessing other forms of capital (as will be considered further below), this is arguably one of the main ways in which AIDS impacts on young people's livelihood prospects. If family members assist with money, knowledge, connections and encouragement, their loss will be noticed. Mabatho, for instance, was particularly upset by the death of her aunt who lived in Maseru, because the aunt was supporting her financially following her mother's death.

AIDS also affects wider social networks. It is widely speculated that AIDS damages social networks' capacities to respond to the demands of proliferating needy households (Mtika, 2001), or that AIDS-affected households become excluded from social networks, being viewed as unlikely to be able to reciprocate (Bryceson et al., 2004). Few studies have compared AIDS-affected and unaffected households or households' more general interactions with other processes such as increasing poverty (Gibbs, 2008), but some evidence from Malawi suggests AIDS-affected individuals are seldom ostracised by their families (Peters et al., 2008). AIDS can certainly, however, disrupt the social networks of children who have to move to a new community to be cared for (Ansell and van Blerk, 2004). Even those who stay at home may have to spend their time caring

for sick relatives or doing housework rather than developing their wider social networks (Robson et al., 2006; Robson, 2004). Moreover, children from homes affected by illness are said to be sad and withdrawn. The boys in Nihelo told us that if their parent is sick 'people can look at you as an angry person as you are thinking about your problems' which inhibits interaction with friends. They may also attend school less regularly, or leave permanently, thus further weakening social networks. Other AIDS-affected young people's social networks were apparently damaged by AIDS-related gossip and stigma (although see Peters et al., 2010 for a critique of this concept). Jamiya, a young married woman, had a reputation for having many boyfriends, her husband was away and her child was frequently sick; consequently few other young people associated with her.

While AIDS had negative outcomes for some young people's social networks, strong social networks were clearly significant in enabling many of those affected by AIDS to access livelihood assets. Some of the most successful young people in the study were orphans who had support and encouragement from adult relatives interested in their futures. In Malawi, access to secondary education in particular depended heavily on young people's social connectedness. Secondary school is a particularly sensitive time to be orphaned as it is expensive and seldom paid for by anyone other than a parent. Mary described how she cried at her father's funeral since she thought her prospect of completing school had ended. However, as noted above, Mary had strong familial networks including an uncle in Mozambique who agreed to pay her secondary school fees following her father's death. Similarly, it was because Edison belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran church choir that he was offered a bursary to attend secondary school. It is perhaps no coincidence that both were able students who might benefit their benefactors later in life.

AIDS has multiple effects on social networks; they may be weakened or in some cases strengthened as relatives or organisations step in to help. In both contexts community-level processes mediate AIDS' impacts, supporting many of those who are orphaned but not those young people who contravene behavioural codes. Moreover, the particular consequences of AIDS for any individual's social networks reflect factors including their age and the timing of sickness and death. Thus temporality is a significant element in producing particular outcomes.

#### 5.2.5. Financial capital

Financial capital may take the form of savings, earnings (whether regular wages or one-off payments), access to loans, or money stored in saleable property such as livestock. Financial investment enhances most livelihood activities as well as enabling access to other livelihood assets. Money can, for instance, pay for education or training; buy equipment, materials or fertilizer; or be loaned to acquaintances to boost social capital. Business or agriculture generally requires financial investment in inputs and equipment, although the amounts needed vary. To start a fish trading business in Malawi, for instance, requires around US\$225 whereas a radio repair business much lower start-up costs.

Access to financial capital in both contexts was affected by the absence of any financial services for rural youth. No young person in either community had a savings account, hence saving to invest in businesses was difficult and risky. In Lesotho, surplus earnings are conventionally invested in livestock, and Irene in Nihelo had done likewise with money from *dimba* cultivation. She explained that this helped avoid wasting it:

*'we were afraid of buying something else that wouldn't benefit us so we thought it was better to buy the cow to save [the] money'*

None had benefited from formal microfinance programmes, in the form of loans or grants. Although adults in Nihelo framed business start-up grants as potentially enabling, young people were generally fearful of loans, aware of the risks of borrowing against the future rather than saving towards it. Other forms of cash transfer have not yet provided young people with direct opportunities to invest (although on pension day in Lesotho, some young women brew beer to tap into this income).

In the absence of financial services, young people relied on families and employment for capital. In Nihelo, it was common for parents to loan or give small sums of money to their offspring to start businesses such as baking scones or growing vegetables. This money was usually available only in the space between leaving school and marrying, by which time they were expected to be independent, highlighting the temporality of financial assets. Many young people also undertook casual work or labour migration to earn money to invest. Jackson, for instance, had saved enough from building houses to start a small business selling bread and bananas to minibus passengers in Blantyre. This exemplifies how the outputs of livelihoods are also inputs (Bebbington, 1999).

While many relied on families, some AIDS-affected young people reported being unable to access money from parents, either because one or both parents had died or because sickness impoverished their households through healthcare costs or loss of earnings. Family illness or funerals that coincided temporally with a child leaving school could be particularly problematic, this being the time when they might expect to receive financial assistance. AIDS, as a pressing immediate concern, could also cost young people money directly, reducing the cash available to invest in their futures. The following extract from a participatory exercise with young women in Nihelo offers an illustration.

Assistant:	<i>How does it affect the future of youth whose parents are sick?</i>
Participant 1:	<i>Your future is doomed</i>
Participant 2:	<i>If you were doing business, your capital is used up</i>
Assistant:	<i>Why is it used up?</i>
Participant 3:	<i>It is used up because you are at home and use the money in helping your parents</i>

AIDS-affected young people generally depended on other sources of income. Few could borrow money from friends ('they will tell you that they equally don't have money' according to young women in Nihelo), but none reported difficulties finding paid work for reasons that might be associated with AIDS. Very few had inherited money on the death of a parent: within the context of these villages, few people had significant financial savings, and any money was spent meeting healthcare and funeral costs. Moreover, any money left by a parent would usually be split multiple ways.

As with social capital, AIDS has multiple effects on financial capital. It can reduce the availability of capital at crucial times, where money is spent on, for instance, medical care and funerals, but occasionally gives young people early access to financial resources through inheritance of cash (albeit rarely) and livestock.

## 6. Conclusions and discussion

In summary, this paper has illustrated that AIDS does affect some young people's access to livelihood assets. It affects the structures and processes that shape access to them, and that allow young people to put them to use. Certain types of livelihood asset, particularly financial and social capital, may be less available to AIDS-affected young people. Access to both natural and physical capital was diminished through various mechanisms, but only a

minority of youth were affected, and more clearly in Lesotho than Malawi. This difference relates to structures and processes that shape access to assets and allow young people to put them to use. There was little evidence that AIDS is negatively affecting young people's access to human capital in the ways often postulated: such youth were likely to advance further through school than their peers, and livelihood skills are acquired in myriad ways besides the direct transmission of knowledge from parents to children. It is noteworthy that young people's access to livelihood assets was in several cases enhanced as a consequence of AIDS.

One of the clearest messages from the research is that AIDS' impacts on young people are not systematic or predictable. Being affected by AIDS in childhood is apparently a poor predictor of livelihood prospects, although alongside other factors it can contribute to vulnerability. The nature of the impacts reflects specific characteristics of young people and the effects of other processes on their lives, which are often more significant. Because young people and their families differ, the impacts of AIDS also differ.

In relation to the NVF hypothesis, the study highlights the need not to isolate AIDS as a contributor to food insecurity. Many other factors operating at varied scales play equally key roles (Ansell et al., 2009). Macro-level processes, such as the response of Malawi's agricultural sector to external market and institutional pressures and the retrenchment of Basotho miners from South Africa are much more prominent in popular understandings of the causes of disadvantage in rural communities. This lends support to a growing awareness that the impacts of AIDS are generally highly varied and conditioned by the specific characteristics of households and communities (Byron et al., 2007). Since many of AIDS' impacts are economic, the effects on young people are seldom readily

distinguishable from broader effects of poverty.

Little attention has been given to whether the impacts of AIDS on livelihood assets primarily render particular individuals vulnerable or whether they affect wider communities. Some assets are lost entirely due to AIDS, while others are merely redistributed. Loss of human capital, for instance, is likely to be total: if a young person fails to get an education or to acquire skills from their parents, no other person gains those assets in their place. By contrast, when a young person fails to inherit land or physical property, that property still exists and can continue to be employed to generate a livelihood for others. The young person affected is nonetheless rendered vulnerable, and potentially food insecure (and within a 'food entitlement decline' model of famine, this is as problematic as a broader decline in production capacity). These distributional effects merit greater attention in understanding potential consequences for food security.

### 6.1. Policy implications

It has been asserted that young people require 'sustained support to ensure that they will be in a position to grow or procure food for themselves as adults' (FAO, 2003). Our research broadly supports this, although the narrow targeting of 'AIDS-affected' young people is inappropriate given that most problems that beset such

young people also affect their relatively 'AIDS-unaffected' peers. Young people's access to livelihood assets and their capacity to use them are shaped, according to the SLF, by a range of structures and processes. Any policy response to the impacts of AIDS on access to assets must intervene in these structures and processes, which operate across economic, social and political domains locally, nationally and internationally. Significantly, young people's employment possibilities reflect not only individual assets but also international market conditions and trade agreements (which no longer favour Malawi's agricultural estates but have encouraged a burgeoning of garment factories in Lesotho), while national agricultural policies such as Malawi's targeted input subsidy also shape access to livelihood opportunities, including by freeing time and money to invest in non-agricultural ventures.

Governments have used policy interventions to try to assist AIDS-affected young people to access assets. Microcredit programmes offer some young people access to cash, although beneficiaries remain limited in number and young people themselves express concerns about indebtedness. Perhaps more significant are new social cash transfer schemes that provide income to many households with orphans or sick adults. In terms of enhancing social capital, governments are more limited, although policies to keep young people in school (such as facilitating transfer between schools) could help. Smaller organisations are better placed to enhance young people's social networks through, for instance, supporting youth clubs and church groups.

The past decade has witnessed major efforts to keep children in school, often supported by the World Bank. Free primary education and secondary school bursaries have apparently improved AIDS-affected children's access to education, although school 'development fees' and uniform requirements continue to inhibit attendance in Malawi. However, given that education actually provides livelihood security to very few young people, a reformed curriculum, more relevant to rural young people's likely livelihoods, has potentially greater significance. Education policy also encompasses vocational training, yet this seemingly remains a low priority for governments and development partners (Hajdu et al., 2011). Only one research participant had experienced formal training, and she was unable to employ her skills for lack of financial capital.

Land policies, too, have begun to influence livelihood prospects, with some young couples in Lesotho being allocated fields and some Nihelo residents being relocated to former estate land, thereby relieving pressure on fields for those remaining in the village. There is potential for further developments in this area. Access to physical capital has received less attention, but there is growing support for orphaned children to claim inheritance rights, as well as cooperative schemes, microfinance, and the provision of grants or tools for young people completing vocational training.

An aspect of the policy response to AIDS' impacts on young people that merits greater attention is the balance between present and future livelihood needs. While education systems are focused (at least in theory) on future livelihoods, policy is generally less forward thinking in relation to the other forms of asset young people will need to draw on in the future. In general, policy on young people is largely rooted in departments of health and social welfare and emphasises present lives and wellbeing, not future livelihoods. There is a clear need for broader consideration of young people's future livelihoods and how they might be assisted to accrue assets over time to support these.

## 6.2. Implications for the sustainable livelihoods framework

The SLF has proven valuable in structuring a holistic analysis of the impacts of AIDS on young people's access to livelihood assets, drawing attention to the range of assets young people might

employ and the positive, as well as negative, impacts of the pandemic on access to those assets. In applying the framework, it is important not to give undue attention to individual experiences while neglecting significant structural determinants of entrenched poverty (see Ansell et al., 2009). A wider selection of viable employment opportunities would, for instance, compensate for inability to access the specific assets mentioned above; for many young people, their structural position affects their prospects more than household level impacts of disease. The SLF has also been criticised for omitting certain types of assets. It has been argued that political capital plays a role in enabling people to generate livelihoods (Baumann and Sinha, 2001). Our research suggests that access to reliable information about livelihood opportunities is also crucial, both at a broad level (in Ha Rantelali, for instance, young people are unaware of the many business possibilities that those in Nihelo consider) and also specific job opportunities. Information, then, is a form of asset not fully encompassed by the 'capitals' outlined in the SLF.

Another area, suggested above, that is inadequately addressed in the SLF is the relationship between individual capacity to sustain a livelihood and sustainability at the community level. Historically, the SLF has focused on household level sustainability, yet households are dynamic and young people in particular often move between households. In situations of stress, some assets are permanently destroyed or depleted while others are redistributed, remaining accessible to the community but perhaps not to those whose livelihoods are least secure.

Finally, the research highlights the need to recognise the temporality of livelihoods, and to analyse the relationship between present and future activities. Future food security requires not just the sustainability of current livelihoods, but livelihoods as they change over time. This demands consideration both of intergenerational change, and also the changing strategies and actions of individuals over the lifecourse. Youth is a critical time in the production of livelihoods, being a period of rapid change, key decisions and accrual of livelihood assets. All livelihood choices today carry implications for future livelihoods. Understanding how young people balance the livelihood needs of their present and future lives, and the influences upon their actions in so doing, is highly significant in understanding livelihood change over time and anticipating future societal wellbeing.

## Acknowledgements

This research was funded under the joint ESRC-DFID funding scheme, contract RES-167-25-0167. We are grateful to all those who gave generously of their time in support of the project: members of the Institute of Southern African Studies, National University of Lesotho, and Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, Chancellor College, University of Malawi; the project's National Steering Groups in Malawi and Lesotho; our research assistants, translators, and transcribers; and the young people and adults of Nihelo and Ha Rantelali, and all those who were interviewed for this research.

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